

DESCRIPTION OF A NEW *EMPIDONAX*, WITH NOTES  
ON *EMPIDONAX DIFFICILIS*.

BY HARRY C. OBERHOLSER.

THERE are in the collection of the United States Biological Survey five specimens of an *Empidonax*, taken by Mr. Clark P. Streater on the Santa Barbara Islands, California. These prove to be quite distinct from their nearest mainland relative *E. difficilis*, and to constitute thus an interesting and apparently undescribed form, which, in view of its island habitat, may very appropriately be designated

***Empidonax insulicola*, sp. nov.**

CHARS. SP.—*E. difficili similis, sed supra obscurior et brunnescentior; infra pallidior, pectore vix ochraceo-brunneo lavato.*

Al., 64.5–69.5 (68.2) mm.; caud., 59.5–64 (61.4) mm.; culm. exp., 11–13 (11.8) mm.; tars., 17–18 (17.7) mm.

*Habitat.*—Insulae Santa Barbara, California.

*Description.*—*Type*, male adult, No. 140078, U. S. Nat. Mus., Biological Survey Collection; Santa Rosa Island, California, July 3, 1892; C. P. Streater. Above olive brown, slightly paler and more greenish on rump, darker on head. Wings fuscous, the lesser coverts edged with the color of the back; median and greater coverts tipped with brownish white, this forming two conspicuous wing-bands; secondaries and tertials margined externally with the same color. Tail fuscous, the outer webs of the feathers very narrowly edged with the color of the back. Lores and orbital ring dull yellowish white, the former somewhat mixed with olive; sides of head and neck like the back, but rather lighter, and shading gradually into the color of under parts; chin and throat dull grayish white, faintly washed with yellow; remainder of lower surface straw yellow, slightly paler on jugulum and crissum, inconspicuously tinged across breast and on sides and flanks with olive brown; bend of wing below buff; axillars and inferior wing-coverts straw yellow.

From *Empidonax cineritius*, with typical specimens of which it has been compared, this new species differs in being darker, less ashy, and somewhat more olivaceous above—particularly on the head—and rather deeper, more continuously yellow below. From *E. difficilis* it may be readily distinguished by its darker, browner upper parts, especially the head, and by the usually much paler

colors of the under surface, this most noticeable anteriorly, the jugulum and breast having little of the brownish ochraceous suffusion so apparent in most specimens of *difficilis*. The sides of neck and head are somewhat grayer, the throat is usually distinctly whitish, and the wing-bands appear to be rather more purely white. It will thus be seen that while in some characters *Empidonax insulicola* is to a certain extent intermediate between *difficilis* and *cineritius*, yet in the olive brown color above it departs equally from both, though not in the direction of either.

The characters above ascribed to *insulicola* are reasonably uniform in the series of five specimens examined. One bird, however, from Santa Catalina Island, has the throat rather more clearly white, and the upper parts a little lighter and more olivaceous, but these differences are apparently not material.

So far as it has been possible to ascertain, the only previous record of any representative of the genus *Empidonax* from the Santa Barbara Islands is by Mr. Eli W. Blake, Jr., who gives *Empidonax difficilis* as common on Santa Cruz Island.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Blake's *E. difficilis* is, of course, undoubtedly the *E. insulicola* of the present paper.

For comparison in this connection there have been brought together some 85 specimens of *Empidonax difficilis*, many of them taken in the breeding season, this series representing very fully the North American range of the species. Among these there are very few indeed which can not be distinguished from *Empidonax insulicola* even without comparison, being both lighter and more olivaceous on the upper surface, and more deeply yellow beneath. A considerable range of variation is, however, exhibited, which is not satisfactorily attributable to geographical causes. A specimen from Comox, B. C., and another from Parley's Park, Utah, are nearly as dark above as *insulicola*, but are much more yellowish olivaceous, and are, moreover, easily distinguished by the very deep brownish suffusion on the breast.

The palest birds examined are from the southwestern border of the United States, but with these occur, during the breeding season and often in the same localities, some of the darkest birds in the

---

<sup>1</sup> Auk, IV, 1887, 329.

whole series, together with others which are apparently intermediates. Whether or not this occurrence of paler birds in the southwestern United States shows an inclination of *difficilis* toward intergradation with *cineritius* is not possible certainly to determine from the material at present available, but the greater frequency of such examples in southern California seems at least to indicate that such may be the case. One bird from the Santa Catalina Mts., Pinal County, Arizona (U. S. N. M. No. 117235), is very pale throughout, and differs from *cineritius* chiefly in the quite continuously yellow under parts. A specimen from Napa Valley, California (U. S. N. M. No. 12880), is very similar to the preceding, but is browner and slightly darker above, less extensively yellow below, and rather darker across the breast. Whether or not these two specimens are to be called *cineritius* seems somewhat doubtful. I very much hesitate to record them as such, though they certainly do not represent *difficilis*, unless they may be considered abnormally faded summer birds.

The young of *Empidonax difficilis* appears to be, as a rule, very brown above and light yellowish or buffy below (not dull white as mentioned by Mr. Ridgway<sup>1</sup>), although two immature specimens from Sitka, Alaska, are as bright olive above and as deep yellow below as almost any of the adult examples.

MEASUREMENTS OF SPECIMENS OF *Empidonax insulicola*.

U. S. N. M. No., Biol. Surv. Coll.	Sex and Age.	Locality.	Date.	Wing.	Tail.	Exposed Culmen.	Culmen from Nostril.	Tarsus.	Middle Toe with Claw.
140076	♂ ad.	Santa Catalina I., Calif.	Apr. 15, 1892.	69.5	61	11	9	18	12
140077	♂ ad.	Santa Rosa I., Calif.	July 3, 1892.	64.5	60	13	9	18	12.5
140078	♂ ad.	" " "	" " "	68	59.5	12	9	17	13
140079	♂ ad.	Santa Cruz I., Calif.	July 13, 1892.	69.5	62.5	12	8.5	18	12.5
140080	♂ ad.	" " "	July 16, 1892.	69.5	64	11	8.5	17.5	13
Average	.	.	.	68.2	61.4	11.8	8.8	17.7	12.6

<sup>1</sup> Manual of North American Birds, 1887, 340.

The present new species is here described through the kindness of Dr. C. Hart Merriam. The writer is also indebted to Dr. J. A. Allen for the use of material in the American Museum of Natural History; to Mr. Robert Ridgway for a similar courtesy with regard to the National collection; and to Mr. William Brewster for the loan of specimens of *Empidonax cineritius*.

---

A NOTEWORTHY PLUMAGE OBSERVED IN THE  
AMERICAN EIDER DRAKE (*SOMATERIA*  
*DRESSERI*).

BY ARTHUR H. NORTON.

IN THE ornithological literature there has appeared from time to time, notes reporting the occurrence of the Pacific Eider drake in Atlantic districts of North America. These reports have been based on Eiders having a black V-shaped figure on the throat, a character commonly used, in connection with a white mantle, as diagnostic of *Somateria v-nigra*.

Such records have been questioned, but apparently a final decision has been deferred. Therefore the belief is entertained that a description of certain specimens of *Somateria dresseri*, taken on the east coast of the United States, is of sufficient interest to warrant its appearance here.

The present data clearly show that the black lancet is a character of frequent occurrence in the young drakes of *S. dresseri*; and there are strong reasons for the belief that it occurs in *S. mollissima borealis*. (See Hagerup, Bds. of Greenland, p. 42.)

During the winter of 1891, I received in the flesh, from Penobscot Bay, Me., a specimen of *S. dresseri*, showing marks of immaturity and having a distinct dusky or black lancet on the throat. It being unique in my experience, I wrote to the collector to send any other specimens having black on the throat, with the